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ON THE CRESTED LARKS OF THE NILE VALLEY.

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WHEN, in the winter of 1903-1904, I wrote about the Crested Larks in *Vög. pal. Fauna*, pp. 227-40, I had only a very scanty material from the Nile Valley to study. It was therefore hardly possible to arrive at anything like a final and faultless account in such a difficult group. Since then I have been enabled to see fairly good series, though not at all complete ones from all parts of Egypt. I now come to the following conclusions.

The delta, apparently to Cairo, is inhabited by the darkest form :

Galerida cristata nigricans Brehm.

South of Cairo occurs over a wide area a form which is not so very unlike *G. c. nigricans*, but differs from it at a glance in the paler, more whitish underside and the markings on the jugulum and chest being smaller and more sharply defined. This form was described by Nicoll & Bonhote (*Bull. B.O. Club*, xxiii. p. 101. 1909) as *Galerida cristata moeritica*, from specimens collected in the Fayum. Of the latter I have examined and have now before me several specimens, collected by M. J. Nicoll, one from Luxor, A. L. Butler leg., four from an island in the Nile near Khizam (about 14 km. north of Luxor), Upper Egypt, W. L. S. Loat leg., and a pair, collected at Assuan 24.iii.1850, by Oskar Brehm. These latter are the types of—

Galerida cristata maculata Brehm.

(*Naumannia*, 1858, p. 208). Brehm said that his son Oskar shot a pair with one shot near "Assuan in Nubia," on March 24th, 1850. It is true that he adds "und Alfred ein Weibchen bei Masnou in Spanien am 1 Juni 1850." This latter specimen I have traced; the date is wrongly given. Alfred Brehm was not in Spain in 1850, when he collected with his brother Oskar on the Nile, but we went there 1856. The Masnou specimen was shot May 1st, 1856. It has first been named "*maculata*" by C. L. Brehm, but afterwards he crossed "*maculata*" out and altered it to "*striata*," a *nomen nudum* never published with a description. It is true that this bird is darker and more brownish than other Spanish Crested Larks, and closely resembles the Nile birds; but it belongs, of course, to *G. c. pallida*, the Spanish race, and the Assuan birds are undoubtedly the types of "*maculata*." Therefore this form must be called *G. cristata maculata*, and *moeritica* becomes a synonym. When I wrote Part II. of my book on the palaearctic birds, in 1904, I put *maculata* down as a synonym of *altirostris*; this

is undoubtedly wrong, but I had seen at the time no specimens of *maculata* except those two taken by Brehm half a century before.

South of the habitat of *maculata* lives a paler form, often with a thicker bill,

Galerida cristata altirostris Brehm.

Of this we have now in the Tring Museum specimens from "Nubia," Brehm coll., Kerma, Hon. N. C. Rothschild leg., Merowe on the Dongola bend of the Nile (not Meroë!), N. C. Rothschild leg. It appears to be, therefore, the true Nubian form, living south of Wadi Halfa along the "Dongola bend." C. L. Brehm, when first naming this form (*Vogelfang*, p. 124. 1855), said, "Oberägypten," and in 1858 (*Naumannia*, p. 209), he said, "Oberegyp ten, Nubien und bei Murcia in Spanien!" But C. L. Brehm's ideas of Upper Egypt and Nubia were not very fixed, and he had no regard for geographical distribution. As the type of the name *altirostris* must be regarded an adult male shot by A. E. Brehm in "Nubia," 21. ix. 1851. The label only says "Nubien," but the bird had been shot near Akaseh and not very far from Ambukol, according to A. E. Brehm's *Reiseskizzen*.

South of the Dongola bend we come into the region of the much paler

Galerida cristata isabellina Bp.

of which we have a series from the Lower Atbara, Shendi, and Khartum.

To repeat, we have thus in the valley of the Nile:

1. *G. cristata nigricans* Brehm.

(Synonym, *G. cristata deltae* Hart. 1897.)

Inhabits the delta of the Nile.

2. *G. cristata maculata* Brehm.

(Synonym, *G. cristata moeritica*, Nicoll & Bonh. 1909.)

Egypt south of Cairo and north of Wadi Halfa; exact limits not yet known, but extending north to Lake Menzaleh. I cannot separate the Fayoum birds.

3. *G. cristata altirostris* Brehm.

Nile Valley south of Wadi-Halfa and north of the Atbara, *i.e.* the "Dongola bend," Nubia.

4. *G. cristata isabellina* Bp.

(Synonyms, *flava* and *lutea* Brehm.)

Eastern Sudan, from the Bajuda steppe and the Atbara to the Blue and White Nile.

I am sorry to say that I cannot agree with the conclusions of Mr. Nicoll (*Ibis*, 1914, pp. 546-551). That he took a specimen which should not be considered as the type of *altirostris* to be the type specimen was perhaps my fault, as I formerly thought it might be the type. The Kom-Ombos bird was evidently once thought by Brehm to be the same as his *altirostris*, and in fact it is hardly distinguishable from it, but Kom-Ombos being in Upper Egypt and not in Nubia, we must for geographical reasons consider it to be a non-typical example of *maculata*. If we treat the forms and names as I do now, the distribution becomes

one which we might expect, simple and clear, moreover on the Kcm-Ombos specimen the name *altirostris* has afterwards been scratched out, probably by Brehm himself, and, perhaps by someone else again, under-punctuated, meaning that it should stand after all. In the Akasehch specimen the name *altirostris* has never been scratched out or altered.

G. c. maculata stands between *nigricans* and *altirostris*, some individuals being hardly distinguishable from either of these, but a series shows it to be distinct from both.

Nicoll and Lynes have shown, and specimens collected by Loat and Schrader confirm, that on Lake Menzaleh and near Damietta pale forms occur with dark typical *nigricans*. Evidently the latter is restricted to the black soil of the Nile-delta, while a paler form, which agrees with *maculata* (and not with *altirostris*) inhabits the drier districts east of the delta. It is therefore quite natural that they are found close together and even occasionally side by side, though I fancy that during the nesting season there will be a strict separation.
